It's not too late to plan your time at the meeting (even if you've already landed in Atlanta!), which is a good idea because last year saw some 22,676 attendees. You only need to visit the Hinman Web site, www.hinman.org, where you can:

› search the course schedule;
› download course handouts;
› search the exhibitors via the interactive floor plan and use the My Agenda Tools to create a list of the booths you want to visit. The list can then be printed or e-mailed;
› redeem Continuing Education Credits without a fee for six months after the meeting. Beyond the time limit, however, there is a $10 fee.

Last year's meeting had the unfortunate distinction of closing one day early due to a tornado that hit Atlanta on March 14. The Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) sustained serious damage, thus attendees received refunds for prepaid events that were scheduled on March 15. This was the first tornado to touch the downtown Atlanta area since the 1880s, which when weather record keeping first began. At the time this edition went to press, the 10-day weather forecast for Atlanta had some showers predicted but quite a bit of sun, and we hope for more of the latter by the time the meeting rolls around.

Exhibit Hall Hours

Thursday: 10 a.m.–6 p.m.
Friday: 9 a.m.–6 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Special events

Atlanta Apparel Mart ($15)
March 19 & 20, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Usually only open to trade professionals, but this year Hinman attendees with a name badge and ticket are granted access to any showrooms that display a "samples" sign. Please be aware that the selection will be limited and that credit cards are not always accepted. In addition, those 11 years and younger are not permitted. You can purchase tickets in advance or at the Ticket Sales Desk. (Site: GWCC; entry is at the corner of Spring Street and Harris Street. There will be signs near the escalator to the left of the Apparel Mart Exhibit Hall entrance.)

George Aquarium ($19.50–$369)
March 19–21; Sunday–Friday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Saturday: 9 a.m.–6 p.m.

Would you like to witness first hand what eight million gallons of fresh water and marine water actually look like? Well, then head over to the world's largest aquarium! There are a variety of activities to choose from, and fees vary accordingly and depend on one's age. Please visit www.georgiaaquarium.org for more detailed information. (Site: 227 Baker St., Atlanta, Ga.)

Uptown Entertaining Demonstration Cooking Class ($85)
March 19, 11 a.m.–4 p.m.

Chef Peter Rubin, a master of French cooking and an Atlanta-based caterer, will prepare: roasted vegetable and horseradish canapés; eggplant caviar with garlic pita chips; spice-crusted strip steaks with roasted red pepper cream; sweet potato, corn and red pepper hash browns; romaine salad with blue cheese, bacon and pears; blueberry bread pudding. Attendees will enjoy wine as they taste this menu. Rubin is also the director of the Viking Cooking School, where this demonstration will take place. (Site: Viking Cooking School, 1745 Peachtree St.)

Keynote Session
March 19, 5:30–7:30 p.m.

The doors to the official Hinman opening ceremony open at 5 p.m. (as does the cash bar), and attendees will enjoy musical accompaniment until 5:30 p.m. Featured clinicians will be introduced during the session. The Keynote Speaker is Neal Boortz, who is a veteran of talk radio. (Site: GWCC Auditorium)

Atlanta Hawks Basketball Game
March 19, 7 p.m.

Hinman attendees may purchase discounted tickets for the Atlanta Hawks game against the Dallas Mavericks. Games will take place at the Philips Arena, which is next to the Omni Hotel. To see if tickets are still available, please contact Karin Beckman at (404) 878-7581. (Site: Philips Arena, 1 Philips Dr.)

CNN Studio Tours ($89 for a 55-minute tour)
March 19, tours begin at 9:30, 9:40, 9:50 a.m. and 1:30, 2:30, 3:30 p.m.

Want a behind-the-scenes look at CNN Studios and Turner Broadcasting System? This detailed tour includes climbing stairs, so if you need assistance please let the Hinman Office know in advance. The tour is open to those 5 years old and above and tickets must be purchased in advance or at the CNN Ticket Sales desk found in the CNN Atium. Please arrive 10 minutes before the scheduled start time.

Hinman Luncheon ($195)
March 20, 11:45 a.m.–12 p.m.

Enjoy lunch with Jamie Deen, who is the son of Food Network host Paula Deen, and his younger brother Bobby hosted their own food show, called "Road Tasted," on the Food Network, the reruns of which are still playing. The brothers have also authored two cookbooks, and their third will be published in September. (Site: Ritz-Carlton, Atlanta Downtown, 181 Peachtree St.)

Wine Seminar & Tasting ($85)
March 20, 3–5 p.m.

Educate your palate with some savory wine from the Rhone Valley, France. You'll also get the opportunity to taste a few spicy wines and some sweet ones. Tickets need to be purchased in advance of the event at the Ticket Sales desk in the Registration Hall. (Site: Omni Hotel at CNN Center, South Tower, Atrium Terrace)

Auxiliary Reception
March 20, 7–11 p.m.

The Omni Hotel will host a night of dancing under the auspices of Spectrum Entertainment. Two complimentary drink tickets for those 21 years and older are valid for use between 7 and 9 p.m. for either beer or wine. The cash bar has other drink options and will be open until 11 p.m. (Site: Omni Hotel at CNN Center, North Tower, Grand Ballroom)

Atlantic Thrashers Hockey
March 20, 7:30 p.m.

Watch the Atlanta Thrashers take the ice with the Detroit Red Wings, who were last year's Stanley Cup champions. Discounted tickets are available but likely to sell out, so please call Karin Beckman at (404) 878-7581 to see if any are left. (Site: Philips Arena, 1 Philips Dr.)

Southern Style Cooking Demonstration ($860)
March 21, 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Virginia Willis — author, cook, teacher, television producer — will prepare a specialty Southern menu sure to get mouths watering: pecan-crusted, oven-fried chicken breasts; goat cheese grits and herb toast; cheese grits with Vidalia onions and spring greens; chocolate bread pudding and vanilla cream. (Site: The Cook's Warehouse, 1394 Amsterdam Ave.)

King Tut Exhibit (Adults, $15; Ages 6–17, $8; Age 1 and under are free)
March 21, 1:15–4:00 p.m.

Only in town until May of this year, Atlanta is the North American debut of this new exhibit that includes some 50 objects from Tutankhamun's tomb. There are also artifacts from King Khufun and Hatshepsut, an Egyptian queen who actually became king. Visit www.kingtut.org for more information. Hinman attendees can get a discounted rate at www.ticketmaster.com/promo/ncoxgd and will need to pick up their tickets at the Atlantic Civic Center's Will Call box. (Site: Atlanta Civic Center, 395 Piedmont Ave.)

Dentist Reception 7:30–11 p.m.
(Site: Omni Hotel at CNN Center, International Ballroom)

Banks & Shane is the high-octane band performing at the official closing ceremony and party for this year's meeting. Buffet reception complete with dessert and coffee, as well as a cash bar, will keep you fueled for the dancing ahead of you. Please note that there is a dress code: coat and tie for the gents and cocktail attire for the ladies.